

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

3. The Church in Smyrna



Introduction

In our last study we looked at the Church that was in Ephesus and how they needed to renew their first love and rekindle their love for Jesus. Let's look at the second church mentioned in Revelation.

Scripture Reading: Revelation 2:8-11

Smyrna was a beautiful city 35 miles north of Ephesus. In the Apostle John's day it was closely aligned to Rome and a centre of Caesar worship. Not long after John wrote this letter it was made compulsory to burn incense to Caesar, and consequently the church began to experience persecution. The most well-known martyr was Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, who was burnt alive by the Jews. How fitting that the name Smyrna means myrrh, the fragrant spice used for burial. Today this city is known as Izmir in modern day Turkey.



What kind of difficulties do you think the Christians were experiencing in Smyrna at the time when Jesus spoke these words? See verse 9.



Contrast the words Jesus spoke to the Christians in Smyrna in Revelation 2:9 with the words the Christians in Laodicea spoke about themselves in 3:17. What does God consider true riches to be?



Jesus is telling the Christians in Smyrna that they will soon face a period of persecution and even death. See verse 10. In the light of what they were going to experience how were the words of Jesus in verses 8 and 10b - 11 a real encouragement to them?



Even to this Church, which receives no condemnation, Jesus speaks about the importance of overcoming. What do you think they needed to overcome in order to receive the promises Jesus gave? See verse 10a.



We may not be facing persecution at this time, but we all need to overcome fear in our lives. How can fear prevent us from being an over-comer and inheriting the promises of God? Discuss. Consider what happened to the Children of Israel as a result of fear. See Numbers 14:9.



What areas in your life do you need to work on to overcome fear? Share.

Conclusion

Jesus gave very little commendation to the Church in Smyrna, except three little words: - "You are rich." However these words say so much! We may have plenty of this world's goods, but let's be rich in the things of God – rich in faith, rich in love and joy, rich in generosity and kindness, rich in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Let us not allow fear to rob us of these true riches.